

JANE AUSTEN'S GAZE: A PRIORITIZATION OF THE FEMALE GAZE IN FILMIC
ADAPTATIONS OF PRIDE AND PREJUDICE

by

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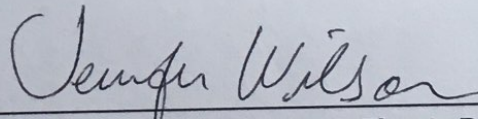
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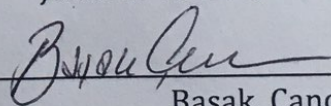
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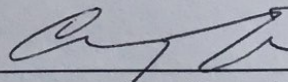
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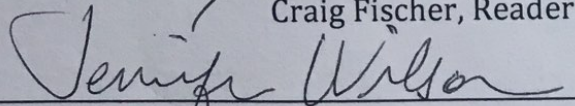
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Jane Austen's Gaze: A Prioritization of the Female Gaze in Filmic Adaptations
of *Pride and Prejudice*

In the two hundred years since its first publication in 1813, Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* has never once gone out of print. To this day, it remains one of the most well-known and well-loved novels of all time. The novel itself is so multifaceted that interpretations by casual readers and literary scholars alike have been widely varied. What remains consistent in all of these readings, however, is an acknowledgement of Austen's mastery of sly social commentary. She deals with issues of ageism and class, but, most noticeably, Austen's novels reflect on the experiences of women during the early nineteenth century. In turn, to visually represent Austen's emphasis on female subjectivity, adaptations of Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* prioritize the female gaze and the female experience. Hank Green's web series *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* offers a striking example of this prioritization due to its focus on the adaptation of free indirect discourse into a visual form, the creation of intimacy, and the framing and containing of the male characters.

In her book *Adaptation and Appropriation*, Julie Sanders astutely notes that "the vocabulary of adaptation is highly labile" (Sanders 3). However, it can be argued that this "labile" nature of the conversations surrounding adaptation stems from the fact that the term "adaptation" itself is a fluid one at best. The same word, as noted by Linda Hutcheon, is used to describe not only the process of conversion from one form--the form of origin--to another, but also the "finished" and "second" product itself. "Adaptation" simultaneously exists as an act and as a product. Therefore, a more thorough understanding of the complex concept of "adaptation" is required in order for any discussion or argument to stand on its own. The dual definitions of

the word “adaptation” must be split to provide more clarity to this fluid definition. First, it will simply be referred to as “the act of adapting.” In this sense, the act of adapting can be viewed as almost synonymous with the concept of “translating.” The second, the finished product, is what will be referred to in the familiar term “adaptation.”

There is no such thing as an original idea, as “art is derived from other art; stories are born of other stories” (Hutcheon 2). Even the concept that there are no original ideas is an unoriginal idea, an idea has been a plague upon creators and appreciators of creations for as long as the mental capacity for comparisons has existed. Interestingly, “the late twentieth century made a particular virtue out of querying the ability or even necessity of being ‘original,’ not least in the arts” (Sanders 1). However, lack of connection as a qualification for creativity is inherently impossible to meet; therefore, it cannot be argued that stolen, borrowed, or updated ideas aren’t worth attention and analysis. Everything that is created is created through involvement with and attention to the past, but it is also created through ingenuity. In fact, “we seem to desire the repetition as much as the change” (Hutcheon 9). The value of creation toes the line between what was before and what is to come.

One of the most popular manifestations of “unoriginal” ideas is the adaptation. At first glance, an adaptation is often viewed as a work of lesser importance than the work in its original form, whether that be a poem, a novel, a letter, or a film itself. This concept has launched a whole field of study, Adaptation Studies, because “an adaptation is a derivation that is not derivative--a work that is second without being secondary” (Hutcheon 9). The field of Adaptation Studies attempts to address two main concerns directly tied to the dual definitions of adaptation: how do we adapt? Why do we adapt? My primary concern here is with the former as

it pertains to Austen and her focus on the female perspective; however, the latter will be addressed later in this text.

The primary concern of those in the adaptation field (how do we adapt?), can be broken down even further. Although it feels like a slight oversimplification, when the question “how do we adapt?” is posed, what is really being deliberated is “how do we make a ‘good’ adaptation?” The concept of a “good” adaptation is a tricky one; “on what grounds, after all, could such a judgement be made” (Sanders 20)? From a marketing standpoint, adaptations tend to do well in the box-office. Is a good adaptation simply one that makes more money than usual? If that’s the case, then the argument can end right here. However, there is a reason that fans and scholars alike will take up arms to defend the works they love. It isn’t just about the money. Making a “good” adaptation, as Hutcheon notes, is all about the “elusive notion of the ‘spirit’ of a work or an artist that has to be captured and conveyed in the adaptation for it to be a success” (Hutcheon 10).

Adaptations, much like translations of texts, fall so easily into the trap where their value and prestige can either be lauded or decimated due to the elusive notion of “spirit.” But “spirit” is not simply limited to “fidelity”. Even though the concept of an adaptation “signals a relationship with an informing source text or original” (Sanders 26), Adaptation Study scholars argue that “it is usually at the very point of infidelity that the most creative acts of adaptation and appropriation take place” (Sanders 20). With such shadowed and vague guidelines and expectations, there is no wonder that the act of adapting, especially of a beloved work like *Pride and Prejudice*, is difficult. And yet, there have been eighteen film adaptations of Austen’s novel

since 1940, the most recent involving zombies. These have been met with varying degrees of disdain, love, and a cult-like following.

Much like Hutcheon, I tend to shy away from the notion that fidelity is equivalent to “spirit.” Instead, “one way to think about unsuccessful adaptations is not in terms of infidelity to a prior text, but in terms of a lack of the creativity and skill to make the text one’s own and thus autonomous” (Hutcheon 20). Each generation’s actors, writers, or directors want to leave their own mark on what many have deemed a “classic,” and their success does not come solely in the finished adaptation, an adaptation where every word has been left the same as the original text. Instead, their success comes in their approach to the act of adapting. For the context of this thesis, the adaptations I will be discussing are from print media to visual media, in this case, from a novel to a film.

An adaptor must relate to the text in a different way because there are different constraints placed on the story when it is adapted from one form of media to another. This does not mean, however, that the act of adapting is an impossible feat. As Hutcheon notes most eloquently, a film “‘says’ things that could be conveyed also in the language of words; yet it says them differently” (Hutcheon 3). How the adaptor chooses to make the film “say” the things that the original text said with written words is the key. As previously discussed, a complete reliance on fidelity is not the answer, but there are most certainly aspects that must remain the same. In particular, the perspective of the novel in regards to power dynamics and the communication of subjective experience must remain. Therefore, the act of adapting Jane Austen’s novel *Pride and Prejudice* into a visual media format is completely reliant on the utilization and prioritization of

the female gaze during all of the creation processes. Only through this prioritization can the woman-centric “spirit” of the novel be captured in the adaptation.

The term “the gaze” was not invented by--but was most certainly popularized by--feminist film theorist Laura Mulvey in her work “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema” (1975). Mulvey builds upon psychoanalytical theories presented by Sigmund Freud to argue the fact that the “unconscious of patriarchal society has structured film form” (Mulvey 57). In particular, she argues that this structuring can be seen most clearly in the “representation of the female form” (Mulvey 57). Cinema is a spectacle in and of itself, and it functions and engages its audience by catering to the audience’s desire to see while not being seen--in other words, voyeurism. However, “the gaze” itself is further broken down into “the complex interaction of looks” (Mulvey 68). The gaze is the viewpoint through which the audience is seeing the story, and, Mulvey argues, this viewpoint has traditionally catered to the male gaze. In this patriarchal film world “ordered by sexual imbalance, pleasure in looking has been split between active/male and passive/female. The determining male gaze projects its phantasy on to the female figure which is styled accordingly” (Mulvey 62).



No. 1: (*Transformers* 2007)

Image No. 1 is a pronounced, example of the male gaze at work in mainstream cinema. Mikaela Banes, played by the then 15-year-old Megan Fox, is the love interest in the action film *Transformers*, a 2007 blockbuster. Little needs to be known about her character to understand the male gaze in this photo. Essentially, the character Mikaela Banes captures the male fantasy. She is scantily clad, she is showing off smooth, hairless skin (a 21st-century sign of femininity), and her hips are positioned significantly farther back than would be natural for most people to hold themselves. Her posture allows her to be viewed as easily accessible by the “majority male audiences” (*Theatrical Market Statistics*, 2). The positioning of her hips also leaves a significant amount of space between her body and the edge of the frame, demonstrating her “lack.” A distinct “lack”--in other words, a lack of protruding genitalia--is used to distinguish between male and female, and “[the female character] can exist only in relation to castration and cannot transcend it” (Mulvey 58).

Most importantly, a woman in a male gaze-dominated film acts as a “signifier for the male other, bound by a symbolic order in which man can live out his fantasies and obsessions through linguistic command by imposing them on the silent image of woman still tied to her place as bearer of meaning, not maker of meaning” (Mulvey 58). For example, in Image No. 1, Mikaela Barnes is not the driving subject of the *Transformers* film. Instead, the spectators, along with the main male protagonist, are encouraged to allow our eyes--our gaze--to linger on the curves of Barnes’s body. By becoming an erotic object, as best displayed in this photo, Barnes is marked as the Other, and the audience is prevented from identifying her as a subject; we are encouraged to watch her as an object. By regarding her as a sexual object, the narrative encourages us to identify with the male character who exercises the gaze. We see through the

male character's eyes. In turn, this solidifies the patriarchal order established in the world of *Transformers* and in the society in which the audience inhabits.

Though it seems to be almost a continuation and perpetuation of the “othering” and defining of a female through the male, the concept of the “female gaze” emerged as a battle-cry of sorts against this propensity to cater to the male fantasy. At its origins and in its simplest form, the female gaze can be understood much in the same way as the male gaze. Essentially, this would mean that the female gaze would be the projection of sexual fantasy onto the male form. However, even with this simplistic definition, finding a “pure” representation in film is extremely difficult. Most attempts at representing the female gaze, in one way or another, fall into the simplistic trap of a trying to represent female fantasy, but they also make it a point to make the sexual “objects,” the male characters, into sympathetic beings. This is a luxury not typically afforded to female characters in the same position under the male gaze. Image No.



Image No. 2:(*Magic Mike* 2012)

2 is a prime example of an attempted, but unsuccessful, representation of the female gaze.

In Steven Spielberg's *Magic Mike*, the men are scantily clad, fit "traditional" concepts of 21st-century Western attractiveness, and put themselves on display to show their "presence." In this way, the men--much like the character Mikaela Banes in Image No. 1--become objects of eroticism and the perceived female fantasy. Despite their being objects, one can also argue that their eroticism is created through displays of physical prowess and power. In turn, this "presence" given to the male performers continues to perpetuate the former configurations of gender power. In addition, if sex and physical appearance are taken out of the equation, the audience comes to identify with and care about the dancers. In the *Magic Mike* narrative, they become more than simple, voyeuristic eye candy. Ultimately, the audience is not encouraged to experience the world of the film through the female perspective, even if they are encouraged to watch the bodies of the male dancers. The concept of the gaze isn't simply arguing for a different perspective of sexualization. This type of understanding is far too simplistic and inaccurate.

The gaze is created through a capturing and rendering of a sort of "voyeuristic separation" (Mulvey 60). In other words, it is what fills the distance between the audience and the visual media. It is the lens, the eye through which the audience sees, and, as Mulvey notes, she is "not in favor of a reconstructed new pleasure" (59). Understanding the female gaze is not as simple as understanding the visual representations of fantasy. Representing a fantasy (or perceived fantasy, which might be a better way to put it) only goes on to perpetuate a new version of reality that is toxic in a different way. Instead of viewing the gaze as an attempt to create and display a fantasy for the audience, the gaze--the female gaze in particular--should allow an avenue of understanding into the "framing and containing the male" (Hopkins 119), how and why one does it. In other words, understanding the gaze is about understanding

dynamics of power communicated through visuals and why certain viewpoints and gazes are prioritized at the price of limiting others. In the case of filmic adaptations of *Pride and Prejudice*, adaptors should definitely work to “frame” and “contain” the male because the text is filtered through a female perspective.

In order to prioritize one experience, the experience of another must be limited to an extent. In her work *The Laugh of Medusa*, feminist theorist Helene Cixous elaborates on how this inclusion and exclusion function in representations of women. Cixous argues that a “woman must write herself: must write about women and bring women to writing, from which they have been driven away as violently as from their bodies—for the same reasons, by the same law, with the same fatal goal. Woman must put herself into the text—as into the world and into history—by her own movement” (Cixous 875). For Cixous, due to traditional patriarchal configurations in society and art, women are often excluded from literature and writings. When they are included, they are typically represented in relation to their bodies. However, the bodies are simply objects for masculine writers, not subjects for feminine readers. For Cixous, to reclaim and create female writing is to also reclaim the female body. By achieving this sort of bodily autonomy, a woman will be able to represent herself and others as subjects.

It is important to note that Cixous is not arguing that for the female body in writing to be liberated the male must be subjugated. To make one the subject does not mean to make another an erotic object, but it does mean that the representation of one must be limited. In turn, the female gaze is about more than representing female sexuality and fantasy, although this is an essential part of the gaze that will be discussed and analyzed further. The female gaze is about representation of the female *experience*. This does not mean that males cannot be present in the

process and the renderings prioritizing the female gaze. However, it does mean that an extreme amount of attention to detail and awareness of social and cultural power dynamics (in this case sexual) must be taken into account and constantly monitored. For “feminine” works (i.e. works where the stories of females as autonomous subjects are prioritized), the male gaze and experience must be set aside in order to bring to light the gaze of those who have been traditionally driven away from their own bodies and stories.

How is a concept as reliant on visual and filmic signifiers as the gaze--in this case, the female gaze--to function and exist within the adaptations of a written work like the novel itself? The gaze in a literary work is a tricky concept to grasp. After all, when we gaze at a work of literature, what we see in the most literal sense are black lines and squiggles on a page. This is where an understanding of how the female gaze communicates an experience beyond simply the realm of visual elements is absolutely vital. As stated before, the gaze is a lens through which we are able to observe and consume a film. In a similar way, the audience continues to be a voyeur of sorts while reading a novel. The difference is that this “lens” isn’t visual, it is textual, and it is directly tied into the narrative voice and perspective of the novel. In the case of *Pride and Prejudice*, this narrative voice is a distinctly feminine one.

The feminine origins of this voice aren’t simply tied to the fact that the author, Jane Austen, is a woman. Instead, the aspect that makes the narrative voice feminine can be traced to the concept of free indirect discourse (FID). Emar Maier’s work “Quotation and Unquotation in Free Indirect Discourse” gives a thorough definition of FID:

There are two main ways to report what someone said or thought. There is direct discourse, where the reporter mimics the original words verbatim, and there is indirect

discourse, where the reporter takes the content that was originally expressed and paraphrases that in her own words. In fictional narratives, a third mode of reporting has emerged, which literary scholars have dubbed free indirect discourse. (345)

A further simplification is simply to say that the thoughts, feelings, ideas, and words of a character can be filtered through and synopsised by a third-person narrator. This third person narrator--the gatekeeper of information, the filter--is our lens, and in *Pride and Prejudice*, she is a woman.

Three aspects of Austen's novel must be analyzed in order to understand this firm gendering of the essentially omniscient and unknown narrator of *Pride and Prejudice*: Austen's important role in the creation and revolutionization of the use of FID, the role of women in eighteenth and nineteenth century England, and the role women play in the spread of information. Though Austen is often lauded as being one of the founding mothers of what is often derogatorily described as "Chick Lit," her narrative approach and style have had even longer and more pervasive effects than her character tropes, particularly her use of FID. In fact, many scholars note that Austen completely revolutionized the way FID was used. In the work "Discerning Voice through Austen Said: Free Indirect Discourse, Coding, and Interpretive (Un)Certainty," it is astutely noted that, "Austen's discovery of what FID could do was comparable in the history of the novel to the discovery of the atomic bomb in the history of warfare" (White). To compare the utilization and manipulation of FID to this degree of weaponry makes one thing clear: using FID gives Austen power and distinctness. That power allows her the ability to step back, yet at the same time have "the narrator [ventriloquize] for the character" (White).

The second aspect that must be understood to support the gendering of the omniscient narrator is the historical and social context, in particular for women, in which *Pride and Prejudice* was written. In eighteenth- and nineteenth-century England, a British woman had very little (if any) choice about the path her life would take. Lower-class women were mostly uneducated and could only obtain “low-paid employment as servants, seamstresses, factory workers, or governesses” (Kubitschek 37) as a means of supporting themselves. In contrast, women of the aristocracy were expected to act with utmost decorum and exist as examples of the “accomplished woman” (Austen 85) for those around them. Although both of these groups are exemplified in *Pride and Prejudice* (the former is represented by Mrs. Reynolds and her many other servants; the latter includes Georgiana Darcy and other characters), it is the Bennet family--in particular, Elizabeth--who remain the focus of this novel.

Jane Austen states, “Mr. Bennet’s property consisted almost entirely in an estate of two thousand a year” (Austen 75). It was not a large fortune at all, but enough to lend him the title of gentleman, and as “a family’s class is determined by that status of its men” (Kubitschek 37), it is abundantly clear that the focus of *Pride and Prejudice* is the *gentry* Georgian woman, which can roughly be equated to the modern concept of the “middle-class.” For a middle-class British woman, the options in life were arguably even more limited than those of either her lower-class or aristocratic counterparts. “Middle class women were socially destined to be dependent on men for financial support” (Kubitschek 37). In contrast to the expectation for her male counterparts or for females of an inferior social class, obtaining work was an impropriety which would have made a *gentry* woman an outcast in society, and--not having had the great luck of being born into a fortune that could be bestowed upon her independently, as was the case with

the aristocratic woman--she would have been entirely reliant upon her father. In addition, if she did not have the prudence to be already married before her father's death--since "entailing estates from the female line" (Austen 198) was the most common practice at the time--she would at that time become dependent on the kindnesses of her other male relations (Kubitschek 37).

Essentially, "[marriage] was the only honourable provision for well-educated young women of small fortune, and however uncertain of giving happiness, must be their pleasantest preservative from want" (Austen 163).

From today's vantage point, *Pride and Prejudice* is often criticized for being a "marriage" novel. A deeper understanding of the role of women in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century England--more specifically, the incredibly limited options for their own lives--makes it clear that it is not marriage for the sake of marriage and love that the novel "obsesses" over. Instead, it is marriage for the sake of survival, the acquisition of power, and the "desire of an establishment" which Austen addresses (Austen 163). How the women and men alike function and attempt to acquire this power is most often communicated through female-oriented FID. In fact, a prime example of this is the way in which Darcy and Bingley are thrown into the spotlight, both at the Meryton town ball, but also in the narrative context: "In understanding, Darcy was the superior. Bingley was by no means deficient, but Darcy was clever. He was at the same time, haughty, reserved, and fastidious, and his manners, though well-bred, were not inviting. In that respect his friend had greatly the advantage. Bingley was sure to be liked wherever he appeared, Darcy was continually giving offence" (Austen 64). The audience is left to assume that these thoughts and ideas are the consensus of men and women alike who encounter Darcy and Bingley at the ball. In other words, the novel uses FID to

summarize and present a collection of a vast variety of character opinions. However, the very fact that they are being compared for the reader's "viewing pleasure" is a distinctly female-oriented facet. After all, a woman during this time gained social recognition and power through her husband's interactions with the world, not her by own merit. Ultimately, Darcy and Bingley are not simply being held up for the gaze as people but as potential husbands.

Though women were often judged by the interactions that their husbands have with the world, the women of *Pride and Prejudice* are by no means powerless. This fact leads to the third aspect that establishes the firm gendering of the narrative voice: the value of information in English society at this time and the sources of that information. As previously stated, the female characters of *Pride and Prejudice*, though they hold a subordinate position in society, are not powerless. Their power simply comes in a different form. The men like Mr. Bennet, Mr. Darcy, and Mr. Bingley may control the finances of their respective families and the overarching society, but it is not discussion of business and finance that drives the narrative of the novel. It is discussion and the spread of information. This information is gathered and communicated through a variety of channels and characters. For the audience, much information comes in the form of FID. For the characters, this information comes in the form of conversation, letters, gossip, and other dispersals of news. Despite all of these different forms, there is one thing that the sources of information have in common. In a "novel full of powerful information centers" (Murray 45), the information centers are predominantly *female*. In turn, this source of information is the third aspect that leads to the firm gendering of the FID used in the novel. Female FID provides information for the audience, but most often the source of this information

is female, and the main female “powerful information centers” that we must pay attention to are Mrs. Bennet, Lady Catherine de Bourgh, and, most importantly, Elizabeth Bennet (Murray 45).

Each of these powerhouse information sources plays a unique role in constructing and spreading information in the novel. Mrs. Bennet was “a woman of mean understanding, little information, and an uncertain temper.... The business of her life was to get her daughters married; its solace was visiting and news” (Austen 53). She fills a more traditional role in her society. She is the communicator of “local” news. As previously noted, women in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century England were predominantly limited to an observational role in society due to their lack of material power. In fact, this is a source of conflict very early on in the novel. Even though Mrs. Bennet was able to provide the information about Mr. Bingley’s acquisition of Netherfield to all those who came in contact with her, she and the Bennet daughters are unable to act on this information “since [the Bennet women] are not to visit” (Austen 54). To visit before the patriarch of the family did so would have been an impropriety from which they could not have recovered, and it is a risk that Mrs. Bennet is unwilling to take, since her goal was to “see but one of [her] daughters happily settled at Netherfield” (Austen 57). In this interaction, it is easy to see not only the privilege that Mr. Bennet experiences as a male of the gentry class in Austen’s society, but also the clear struggle for power between the characters in general that appear throughout the novel. Despite the barrier of gender that is placed on the female characters limiting their actions, Mrs. Bennet truly is the bearer of news for her family. It is through her connections, conversations, and experiences that even her husband is able to connect and interact with the world.

Whereas Mrs. Bennet's sphere of communication influence is often limited within the borders of her own home and community, Lady Catherine de Bourgh embodies the power that a woman of aristocracy might possess. It is created through a combination of money and informational influence. Lady Catherine de Bourgh rules with an iron fist over those in her tutelage, going so far as to demand that Mr. Collins (the Bennets' cousin to whom Longbourne is entailed) find a wife, and that his wife meet her standards. Unlike Mrs. Bennet, her money and widowhood gives her a certain amount of power that cannot be ignored in a patriarchal society. She acknowledges the existing societal rules and customs, but, rather than showing disregard for them, she shows enough respect so that she is able to circumvent and manipulate them later. This can be seen in her interaction with Elizabeth: "'Your father's estate is entailed on Mr. Collins, I think. For your sake,' turning to Charlotte, 'I am glad of it; but otherwise I see no occasion for entailing estates from the female line. -- It was not thought necessary in Sir Lewis de Bourgh's family'" (Austen 198). Lady Catherine de Bourgh's words demonstrate her clear understanding of the situation in which many women found themselves. However, she also acknowledges it is through wealthy familial connections that they are able to "unsubscribe" from it.

Although she is aware of the patriarchal influence in their material society, Lady Catherine de Bourgh is also highly aware of the power that her female fellows have over information. Upon hearing news of Elizabeth's rumored engagement to her nephew Mr. Darcy, Lady Catherine de Bourgh does not seek to find truth and confirmation from her nephew, a man of wealth and influence, but from Elizabeth herself. It is Lady de Bourgh's societal presence and wealth of information that gives her power. In a world "where spies are everywhere and news travels fast" (Murray 44), a woman like Lady Catherine de Bourgh can see all at a moment's

desire. However, “if Lady Catherine is an information centre, we should not forget her defeat at the hand of the triumphant and independant gazer” (Murray 45).

Elizabeth Bennet, despite being described as having a “lively, playful disposition” (Austen 59) and being “uncommonly intelligent” (Austen 70), is not favored by either of the other female information centers in the novel. She is noted by her mother, Mrs. Bennet, to be “not so handsome as Jane, nor half so good humoured as Lydia” (Austen 52), and Lady Catherine de Bourgh remarks that she is an “obstinate, headstrong girl” (Austen 365). At first glance, it easy to assume that Mrs. Bennet’s and Lady Catherine de Bourgh’s resentment--and at times, even hostility--toward Elizabeth is the result of their dismay at her *lack* of understanding of the traditional role of information influencer that her fellows possess. Their true resentment stems from the fact that Elizabeth’s understanding of the role of information and communication and how it functions within her society allows her--much in the way that Lady Catherine de Bourgh is able to manipulate financial and material “rules” through her understanding--to not simply step outside of the societal, information-driven prison that has been created, but to become the ultimate “triumphant and independant gazer...who throughout the novel is symbolically associated with the eye” (Murray 45).

The power of the human eye--the human look--is undeniable, and it is Elizabeth’s eye that holds the most power in *Pride and Prejudice*. On a level of sheer vanity, it is her eyes that first draw Mr. Darcy to her, as her face was “rendered uncommonly intelligent by the expression of her dark eyes...her manners were not that of the fashionable world, he was caught by their easy playfulness” (Austen 70). In this sense, it becomes clear that the eyes, rather than simply being a window to the soul, provide perspective into interactions and power in the novel.

Elizabeth gathers her information through observation and attention, much like her fellow information centers. Once she has the information, she does not use it to manipulate others or spread it further to gain influence. Instead, Elizabeth uses it to control her *personal* position in society. In a society where there is distinct “power and prestige by being in the public eye” (Murray 46), Elizabeth Bennet’s desire to control when and how she is seen is a revolutionary act because, more often than not, Elizabeth prefers to be the gazer rather than the gazed. This desire, in turn, helps to establish the subjective power dynamics and alliances in the novel, i.e., who is a welcome “intruder” and who is not. This is best exemplified in Elizabeth’s interactions with her two main suitors, Mr. Collins and Mr. Darcy.

Early on, Mr. Collins is portrayed to the audience as a nuisance in the lives of the Bennet family. Despite this, his ability to act as a source of amusement and scorn for the quick-witted Elizabeth Bennet, if not making him welcome, at least establishes him as tolerable. It is during his proposal that he truly becomes an intruder in this story. After Elizabeth’s initial rejection of his proposal, Mr. Collins remarks, “[Elizabeth] would have been less amiable in [his] eyes had there not been this little unwillingness...[his] attentions have been too marked to be mistaken” (Austen 147). Mr. Collins attempts to usurp the pre-established gendering of the gazer and narrative of *Pride and Prejudice*. He attempts to subject Elizabeth Bennet--the predominant lens and information source outside of the omniscient, FID utilizing narrator--to *his* gaze and make her fulfill the “traditional exhibitionist role” (Mulvey 62). However, Elizabeth quickly rectifies and solidifies this challenge by making it very clear that his gaze is unwelcome and will not be tolerated, and she “would rather be paid the compliment of being believed” (Austen 150).

Mr. Darcy plays a role as an intruder which is far more complicated. Like Mr. Collins, Mr. Darcy at first acts as a source of amusement for Elizabeth. After his disdain for Elizabeth is clearly shown--“she is tolerable; but not handsome enough to tempt *me*; and I am in no humor at present to give consequence to young ladies who are slighted by other men” (Austen 59)--he is no longer seen as a threat or an intruder. Instead, he becomes an anecdote and Elizabeth “told the story...with great spirit among her friends; for she had a lively, playful disposition, which delighted in anything ridiculous” (Austen 59). He is no longer in Elizabeth’s gaze; however, this inattention and lack of management creates the possibility for Elizabeth to become an “object of admiration” for him (Austen 96). Once again, a male character attempts to relegate Elizabeth to the passive, subordinate position of being gazed at. Because Elizabeth does not “perform to strangers” (Austen 209), this situation is quickly rectified. As she did with Mr. Collins, Elizabeth makes it clear to Mr. Darcy that his oppressing gaze is unwelcome and will not be tolerated. Once again, Elizabeth takes back her independent eye.

The difference which allows Mr. Darcy to shift from an intruder like Mr. Collins to a welcome member of the “cast” is that he, after Elizabeth refuses his proposal, allows himself to “bear the burden of sexual objectification” (Mulvey 62). Mr. Darcy’s willing subjection to the gaze can most clearly be seen during Elizabeth’s time at Pemberley.

When she [*saw*] him thus seeking the acquaintance, and courting the good opinion of people, with whom any intercourse a few months ago would have been a disgrace; when she [*saw*] him thus civil, not only to herself, but to the very relations whom he had openly disdained, and recollected their last lively scene in Hunsford Parsonage, the difference,

the change was so great, and struck so forcibly on her mind, that she could hardly restrain her astonishment from being [*visible*] (Austen 283; emphasis added).

During an interaction at Rosings Park, Elizabeth had remarked to Mr. Darcy, “We neither of us perform to strangers” (Austen 209). Understanding her role as an independent gazer, Mr. Darcy performs to Elizabeth at Pemberley. He allows her to see him and becomes the object of her gaze, and, since Elizabeth acts as a source of information for the audience, “[Mr. Darcy] himself clearly becomes the object of ours” (Hopkins 114). Through his respect of the nature and importance of the female gaze (most notably Elizabeth Bennet’s gaze in *Pride and Prejudice*), Mr. Darcy becomes a beloved guest in Elizabeth Bennet’s story, and ours as well.

It is this story, Elizabeth Bennet’s story, that has been so widely loved and adapted. Adaptations of *Pride and Prejudice* exist in all forms and levels of fidelity to the original text. Some adaptations, such as the 1995 BBC mini-series, attempt to capture the narrative word-for-word, which is much more possible in six hours of screen time. On the other hand, there are adaptations like Joe Wright’s 2005 film version of *Pride and Prejudice*. With its superb acting, costume design, and sets, it was nominated for several Academy Awards. However, without a prioritization of the female gaze in filmic adaptations of *Pride and Prejudice*, the heart of the novel, Elizabeth Bennet, can be so easily lost. Despite its relative newness as an adaptation and as a medium, the important role that the foregrounding of the gaze plays, and the success that can follow when this is effectively achieved, is best displayed in the 2012 webseries *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*.

The Lizzie Bennet Diaries is an Emmy Award-winning small screen adaptation of *Pride and Prejudice*, but “not exactly a traditional adaptation but rather a self-proclaimed experiment”

(Jandl 168). Set in the 21st century, the webseries consists of one hundred episodes “adding up to seven hours worth of video material” (Jandl 168). The story itself is being told in the popular vlog (video blog) format as it follows the adventures of Lizzie Bennet, “a 24-year-old grad student with a mountain of student loans who’s living at home and preparing for a career, but to [her] mom the only thing that matters is that [she’s] single” (Ep 1: My Name Is Lizzie Bennet). Joining Lizzie are her sisters Jane (an aspiring fashion designer) and Lydia (an energetic party girl).

The interesting aspect of this adaptation is more than a character update which gives the “diverse young audience more opportunities to identify with the characters and the story. Some of these changes pertain to ethnicity: Charlotte Lucas, for instance, becomes Charlotte Lu, and Charles Bingley becomes Bing Lee, both Asian-Americans. Fitz Williams, a character derived from Colonel Fitzwilliam, is black (and gay)” (Tepper 46).



Image No. 3: (*The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*, “Episode 35: Home Sweet Home”)

It’s not even the transportation of *Pride and Prejudice* to the context of 21st century American culture that makes the adaptation pertinent to analysis, although both of these afore-mentioned

aspects are important to the webseries and adaptation itself. *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* is seen as innovative due to its unprecedented use of “a new type of social storytelling, one that boasts veritably limitless possibilities for cultivated audience connectivity: transmedia. Transmedia storytellers actually build their narratives across these platforms, rolling together video, audio, text, and social engagement” (Tepper 45). *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* “is the first literary adaptation to use Youtube as its primary medium. It is indeed the first and so far the most successful literary adaptation expressly produced on and for Youtube” (Jandl 168).

The “universe” of *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* consists of a dozen separate social media accounts and spin-off YouTube channels. However, due to the heavy reliance on visual aspects in regards to discussions of the filmic adaptations, it is only the Youtube channel on which *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* episodes themselves are uploaded that will be the focus of this discussion. Although transmedia storytelling over a multitude of platforms *can* allow for further immersion into the narrative, in order to understand the story, viewing of the videos is the only vital aspect. In short, these “vlogs” are being analyzed as an independent narrative from their collaborative social media accounts. What is particularly fascinating about *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*, and what makes it such a clever and innovative adaptation, is not simply this new medium that allows for further immersion. Instead, just as the original *Pride and Prejudice* could not have been created without the use of FID to communicate the feminine narrative voice and perspective, *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* cannot exist and succeed without the prioritization and manipulation of the female gaze to tell its story.

At first glance, an adaptation of *Pride and Prejudice* into the 21st century seems riddled with potential plot holes and shortcomings. However, (through a thorough understanding of the

theory of the gaze and FID) this series creates between this new form of adaptation and the source material. In particular, there are two aspects which play an essential role in developing an understanding of how the female gaze functions in the context of a vlog: intimacy with which the audience is allowed to look, and the “containment” and “framing” of the male characters (Hopkins 119).

In particular, manufactured intimacy is one of the most apparent tools. Early on in the series, Charlotte jokingly remarks to Lizzie, “People like the DIY look. The video feels more authentic when it’s not too polished” (Episode 8: “Charlotte’s Back”). Despite the consistent lighting effectively illuminating the subject of the camera, the continual perpetuation of an actual narrative, and the jokingly added graphics, the webseries captures a certain element of “inauthentic authenticity” (Jandl 175).



Image No. 4: (*The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*, “Episode 12: Jane Chimes In”)

Image No. 4 is a prime example of this oxymoronic approach of inauthentic authenticity to visual storytelling in *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*. As in *Pride and Prejudice*, the stories are told primarily through the lenses of the female creators. Typically, the creator is Lizzie. However,

like in *Pride and Prejudice*, there are other female information centers. In this case, and throughout much of the vlog, the other information center is often played by Charlotte Lu. In the case of Image No. 4, the authenticity stems from Lizzie's willingness and ability to share her experiences with the audience. Lizzie is very clear about her perspective of the unfolding of events, and, as becomes a theme in the blog, she tends to not hold back for the sake of preserving appearances for herself or the subjects of discussion. In contrast, the inauthenticity comes from the fact that the graphics added, "LISTEN TO CHARLOTTE," remind the audience that there is in fact editing going on in these videos which is highly reminiscent of FID used in Austen's novel. We are seeing things through a cultivated and specific perspective. In the same respect, the added graphics are also a great example of how intimacy--one of the aspects of how the female gaze is established in *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*--is created in the context of vlogging.

The format of the vlog lends itself to the small scale. After all, it was first created by social media influencers in order to let their audience "follow them around" and experience their "day-to-day" life alongside them. The format of the vlog is an intimate one, and this is especially true for *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*; there are only five separate shooting locations, two of which exist within the Bennets' own "house." This is not an adaptation meant to show off grandiose landscapes and costumes--in this respect, *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* episodes are similar to Austen's novels as they tend to present the "typical" life and interests of females in the gentry class. Instead, *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* strives to provide intimate looks into the inner workings and experiences of Lizzie Bennet; "this means that whatever she is prepared to share on the Internet will be subjective as well as selective. Accordingly, her perspective is never presented as the whole truth. What the viewers see and hear in the videos is always filtered through Lizzie"

(Jandl 178). The audience is constantly reminded of this essential aspect as it is noted time and time again by characters that “Lizzie sees what Lizzie sees” (Episode 15: “Lizzie Bennet is in Denial”). In her diaries, Lizzie Bennet (like the FID narrator of *Pride and Prejudice*) is the lens through which we see the events unfold, and, as in the novel, this gaze is distinctly female.

More important than the creation of intimacy established through the editing process (which is purposefully made very visual) and the “small-scale” nature of vlogging itself is the female gaze--the female *experience*, not just representation of sexual fantasies. This is created through the approaches *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* has towards “framing and containing the male” (Hopkins 119). In respect to framing, *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* is an extremely interesting example because there is little movement in this series. This movement can be viewed as two separate aspects: physical movement (mostly, we are contained within the confines of one frame of Lizzie’s bedroom) and the movement/shifting of perspective. The latter of these two is the most important; it emphasizes the prevalence of gaze (personal perspective and overarching experience) in *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*.



Image No. 5: (*The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*, “Episode 1: My Name is Lizzie Bennet”)

Image No. 5 offers a prime example of the form that the gaze in the series typically takes. That form is Lizzie Bennet. Although she is often joined by guests (her sisters and friends), it is Lizzie who, for the most part, communicates with the audience. Typically, when she is featured alone, Lizzie rests in the center of the frame, making it clear that hers is the perspective the audience is getting. The space surrounding her is typically left empty. In addition, there is a distinct emphasis on close-ups. This is typical of the vlog format, but, more than this, its use in vlogs and in television indicates an extreme level of intimacy. Overall, these aspects communicate clearly that distractions are not needed as the audience is truly encouraged to be in Lizzie's mindset.

This provides a stark contrast when the perspective shifts; these occurrences happen very rarely throughout the series without Lizzie's being present and consenting. For example, in Image No. 6, Charlotte and Jane appear in the vlog without Lizzie even in the room.



Image No. 6: (*The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*, “Episode 15: Lizzie Bennet is in Denial”)

They do this in an attempt to communicate information to the audience that Lizzie's lens otherwise would not allow to be seen, going so far as to say that “her last video was a bit

inaccurate” (*The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*, “Episode 15: Lizzie Bennet is in Denial”). Upon her return, Lizzie accuses the two of “hijacking [her] video blog” (*The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*, “Episode 16: Happiness in the Pursuit of Life”), and quickly steers the narrative back to the traditional experience and perspective. It is important to note that in Image No. 6, Charlotte and Jane are not subscribing to the narrative that Lizzie herself typically tries to communicate, but they do subscribe to the traditional framing format (the location is Lizzie’s bedroom and there is no camera motion) and storytelling approach in the form of costume theater.

In the vlog, costume theater plays an essential role. Due to the small-scale nature of vlogging, most interactions which are being recounted take place off-camera. However, Lizzie still chooses to share these experiences with the audience in the form of costume theater. Each character represented has a sort-of essential prop. For Darcy, it’s a cap; for Bingley, a stethoscope; and for Catherine de Bourgh, a stuffed dog and a pair of horn-rimmed glasses. This approach to costume theater has two effects. First, it “invites play, invites immersion, and establishes a degree of authenticity into which the audience can buy in” (Tepper 47). Secondly, it emphasizes that what we are seeing is highly filtered and communicated through a specific narrative voice (Lizzie’s).

At times, the costume theater performances can get extremely meta-referential; characters often play themselves or play in a scene alongside another character playing a version of them. It is important to remember that the character that the person is playing isn’t actually the person, but the character Lizzie *perceives* them to be and writes them as in her “scripts.” One of the most important of these instances is after a performance in which Darcy and Lizzie play “themselves.” Later, they discuss Lizzie’s use of costume theater:

Lizzie: There's this theory about levels of mediation in media that says it's possible for artificiality to both remind the audience that what they are seeing is a construction while at the same time adding to their level of immersion.

Darcy: You thought that costume theater as ourselves would remind the audience that this isn't a conversation that we would naturally have. (*The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*, "Episode 80: Hyper-Mediation in the New Media")



Image No. 7: (*The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*, Episode 80: "Hyper-Mediation in the New Media")

This approach to "mediation" and "construction" in the context of *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* is particularly noticeable and important in regards to how the male characters are portrayed in the series.

In Image No. 8, Lizzie and her sister Lydia embody Darcy and Bing Lee, respectively. This is just one of the many examples of the extreme presence that costume theater has in Lizzie's representations of the male characters. In fact, Lizzie's representations are far more

prevalent than the actual male characters themselves. The “men of the hour” rarely grace the small screen



Image No. 8: (*The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*, Episode 6: “Snobby Mr. Douchey”)

Bing Lee does not make an actual appearance until Episode 28: “Meeting Bing Lee,” and Darcy himself does not even come into the narrative physically until well over half the series has been completed. This technique creates two effects. First, it builds suspense for the audience which increases viewership; the scene where Darcy is finally revealed has well over 1 million views, more than any other episode in the series. Second, and more importantly for prioritizing the female gaze, it creates a particularly female lens. As previously mentioned, with only the presence of costume theater representations of the male characters for much of the series, the audience has a distinctly female lens and perspective to look through.

Even when Lizzie does not control the representations through costume theater and the males make an appearance themselves, they are still deeply under the scrutiny of both Lizzie and the audience. In *Pride and Prejudice*, Elizabeth’s male suitors do not respect her position of

power as an independent gazer and possessor of information. In much the same manner, male characters in *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* often don't respect the unwritten "rules" for entering Lizzie's frame. Consequently, these male characters who don't respect the boundaries of the frame--in other words, the boundaries of the gaze--appear as nuisances and, in serious cases, villains. The three prime examples of this are Mr. Collins, George Wickham, and Mr. Darcy.

As in *Pride and Prejudice*, these intrusions are complex. To begin with, George Wickham is the most villainous and unwelcome of the intruders to infringe upon the female gaze. As can be seen in Image No. 9, George Wickham enters into the frame without Lizzie's consent. He is not the first to do this, as Lizzie lives in a house with two sisters who are very involved in her life and video blog; intrusions are not uncommon. The difference, however, is that George Wickham goes so far as to cover Lizzie's eyes. He literally and metaphorically blinds her and eliminates her ability to gaze.



Image No. 9: (*The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*, "Episode 49: Not Paranoid")

In addition to his invasion and his refusal to respect the metaphorical boundaries of the frame (i.e., the female gaze), George Wickham shows little regard for the format and literal boundaries of the visual frame as well. If he is not approaching from behind, he often intrudes



Image No. 10: (*The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*, “Episode 46: Birthday Party Battle Plan”) from the right side of the frame to. This is contrary to western literary traditions, as we read from left to right, not right to left; therefore, not only is George Wickham intruding, but he is also doing it in a way that is subconsciously and visually offputting to the audience. In fact, although she says it partly in jest, Lizzie remarks to George, “I told you, you could stay if you didn’t interrupt me” (*The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*, “Episode 46: Birthday Party Battle Plan”). George Wickham is an invader who disrupts the visual harmony and the traditional narrative and storytelling format of Lizzie’s vlogs as well.

Finally, and most importantly of all, Wickham is firmly established as the most prominent villain and intruder of *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* by subjecting Lydia, one of the predominant female characters, to sexual objectification. In comparison to his hasty elopement in Austen’s novel, George Wickham makes a sex tape of Lydia Bennet. Although the filming of

this intimate interaction between the two was consensual, it is when Wickham decides to use the video for personal gain (without Lydia's consent) that he becomes a villain. George Wickham sets up a website "asking for subscriptions to a sex tape with 'Youtube Star Lydia Bennet'" (*The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*, "Episode 84: Ugh"). By posting the video for others to view without Lydia's consent, he is turning her body in an object for viewing pleasure for an audience. To view an individual in a sexual capacity is not uncommon in the world of media. However since the audience has been conditioned throughout the vlog to identify with the female characters and view their bodies as autonomous objects for storytelling, by recording and attempting to post the video, George Wickham violates the pre-established and female-driven and orientated visual narrative. Ultimately, he is villainous by being the most frequent and aggressive intruder in the female run and sanctioned spaces in *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* without the proper handling and consent of the filter (Lizzie).

Like George Wickham, Mr. Collins is guilty of the crime of frame violation as well. He



Image No. 11: (*The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*, "Episode 36: Mr. Collins Returns")

also approaches from behind and enters the vlogs without Lizzie's consent. In his interactions with Lizzie and other characters on the vlogs, he is often boring, pompous, and prone to rambling about his position at a multimedia tech company and about his esteemed boss, Catherine de Bourgh. Even by the end of his role in *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*, Lizzie still finds him irritating more often than not. What makes him markedly different from the dastardly role that George Wickham plays is that even though he does not understand exactly why he must be "contained" and "framed," he is willing to try and learn and adhere to the typical format of Lizzie's vlog. As seen



Image No. 11: (*The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*, "Episode 37: Lydia vs. Mr. Collins")

in Image No. 11, though he is stiff and uncomfortable, he adheres to the guidance provided by Lydia after inquiring after how exactly Lizzie goes about making her vlogs.

Similar to Mr. Darcy's intrusions in *Pride and Prejudice*, Darcy's scene violations hold the most complex role until he finally accepts his framing and containment in Lizzie's narrative. Once again, when he enters the frame for the first time, Darcy comes from behind (Image No. 12). However, unlike George Wickham and Mr. Collins, Darcy is unaware

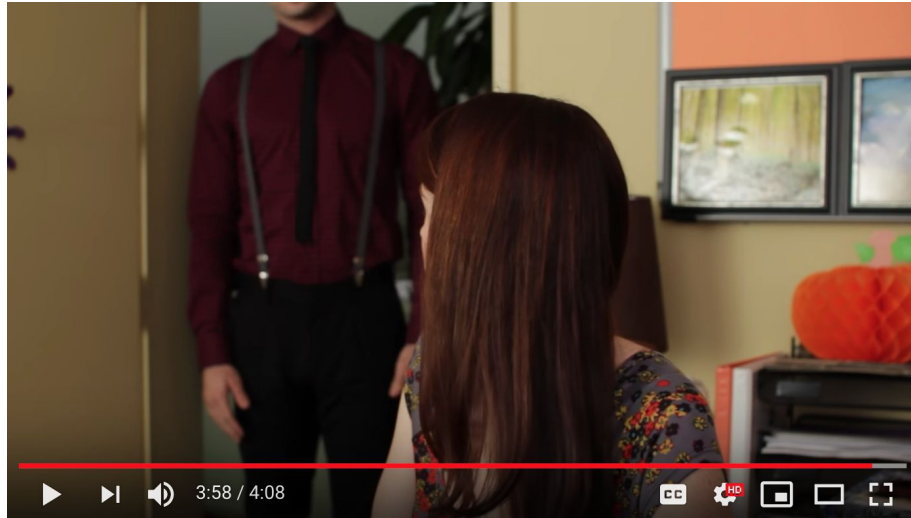


Image No. 12: (*The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*, “Episode 59: Staff Spirit”)

that he is being filmed. Therefore, his interactions with Lizzie within the vlogs is less a competition of controlling the narrative and the lens of storytelling and more about making her the object of his own gaze. Without knowledge of the camera’s presence (much less the presence and attention that will come with the thousands of viewers once the video is posted), it is Lizzie’s gaze that he attempts to capture. As can be seen in Image No. 13, he makes



Image No. 13: (*The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*, “Episode 60: Are You Kidding Me”)

consistent eye contact with Lizzie, watching her, and the audience watches him watching her. Just as in the novel, Lizzie rejects Darcy's affections, and, after being pushed by Darcy to explain her rejection, she exclaims, "Why don't you watch my videos?" (*The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*, "Episode 60: Are You Kidding Me") In a moment of anger and spontaneity, Lizzie exposes herself and her perspective to the consumption of Darcy's own gaze.

After watching her videos, Darcy does not use them to manipulate and extort from Lizzie. Instead, he attempts to learn, and he does so much more successfully than Mr. Collins did. After watching her videos, he finds Lizzie and--unlike George Wickham--enters the frame from the right. Unlike Mr. Collins, he pauses upon entering and poses the question: "May I sit down?" (*The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*, "Episode 61: Yeah I Know"). Instead of intruding, Darcy asks to be invited into the frame, a habit that he carries with him throughout the rest of the series. By asking to be invited into the frame, he shows an understanding that not only will he be contained by the frame of the camera, but also by the perspectives of the female lens of Lizzie. Just as Mr. Darcy performs for Elizabeth Bennet in *Pride and Prejudice*, Darcy quickly learns and becomes willing to perform for Lizzie and her audience. Though clearly uncomfortable under such a gaze, he is much more interactive with the camera. He even suggests that they perform costume theater together, and he goes above and beyond to make sure his performance is stellar.

As can be seen in Image No. 15, Darcy wears the costume well. He makes contact with the camera, all the while attempting to make Lizzie and the audience laugh. In this instance, it becomes clear that Darcy not only understands the importance of the female



Image No. 14: (*The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*, “Episode 83: Corporate Interview”)

gaze in *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*, but he accepts it and is willing to subscribe to it as well.

This transition, a transition that no other character in the novel or in the webseries experiences, enables him to become a happily accepted cast member in Lizzie’s story. In no other place is this better exemplified than when he is welcomed in one of Lizzie’s final videos. In his role



Image No. 15: (*The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*, “Episode 99: Future Talk”)

in this video, Darcy becomes the only character besides Lizzie herself to appear alone in the frame, as can be seen in Image No. 15. Despite this rare position and the ability it gives him to control the narrative and gaze, he still yields his “power” to Lizzie. He addresses her often, makes eye contact with her behind the camera, and checks in with her about the proper approach for vlogging: “So I just start talking?” (*The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*, “Episode 99: Future Talk”). Ultimately, it is not just his willingness to learn, but his understanding and acceptance of the important role that the female gaze--Lizzie’s gaze--plays in *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* which enables him earn Lizzie’s affections and her trust. This trust, in particular, makes it possible for Lizzie to put her vlogs and her experiences in his hands at well.

Austen’s work is often criticized by male and female critics alike for its lack of action. Tony Tanner remarks in his introduction to the novel that “during a decade in which Napoleon was effectively engaging, if not transforming, Europe, Jane Austen composed a novel in which the most important events are the fact that a man changes his manners and a young lady changes her mind” (Tanner 7). Though factually true, Tanner’s synopsis of the events in Austen’s novel completely discredits and ignores the two revolutionary aspects of *Pride and Prejudice*. In the first, Austen establishes a new approach to the creation and communication of a narrative. As Cixous writes in her work *The Laugh of Medusa*, “A feminine text cannot fail to be more than subversive. It is volcanic; as it is written it brings about an upheaval of the old property crust, carrier of masculine investments; there's no other way” (Cixous 888). The volcanic approach that revolutionizes typical approaches to storytelling and subverts the masculine traditions that organize them is Austen’s creation of FID. By using FID, Austen does not attempt to show that her narrator is unbiased in the recounting of the events of the novel. Instead, the FID narrator is

highly culturally situated, and this approach opens the door to the possibility of firmly gendering a narrative and its perspective. The second aspect that shows Tanner's ungenerous understanding of the Austen's novel is the revolutionary act of telling a *female* story.

The act of storytelling is an incredibly powerful one, because "when the 'repressed' of their culture and their society returns, it's an explosive, utterly destructive, staggering return" (Cixous 886). Austen long-ago canonization and acceptance into mainstream academia leads many to form the misconception that Austen and her works are no longer representative of a "repressed" group. However, Austen's canonization came about against incredible odds, and her origin story is important. Austen was writing in a time where the voices of women were not particularly valued or respected, and representations in "the media" were often not through a woman's own perspective. This enables us to understand that it is Austen's prioritization of female subjectivity, sexuality, agency, and experience in a time of patrilineal wealth and power that makes her revolutionary and inspirational for female writers that followed.

This kind of inspiration is absolutely essential for the acts of creation and identity formation. As Mulvey notes, "Jacques Lacan has described how the moment when a child recognizes its own image in the mirror is crucial for the constitution of the ego" (Mulvey 60). To be seen is to be known, and this is why the stories we tell and consume are important. They are what construct the dominant narrative of a society. Too often, creative endeavours subscribe to the typical formations of power and only represent particular groups, groups that are in power. Therefore, in order to create a more truthful narrative about society, it is absolutely essential that we prioritize and accurately represent the voices of those who are so routinely ignored.

The question then arises: how do we bring these voices to the forefront of discussion, society, and public consumption? Adaptations are a powerful avenue to find an answer to this question as they provide works whose inspirations and gaze can be analyzed. Adaptations of works function much in the same way that translations of works do. When going from one language or one media form to another, there is always going to be something lost in translation. More often than not, “when dealing with Austen’s use of FID, translators have tended to reduce the diversity of voices and to neutralize features not belonging to the language of the narrator” (Alsina 8). This is detrimental to the preservation of the heart of *Pride and Prejudice* because, by eliminating or neutralizing the use of FID, the female perspective is being eliminated as well. What makes the *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* interesting is that it does not attempt to cut; instead, it has adapted FID to fit the constraints of the technology, so that the influencing perspective through which the audience is being told the cannot be ignored. To adapt one novel is not the solution to the problem. However, the overwhelming success of *Pride and Prejudice* and its many adaptations (in particular, *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*) shines a positive and illuminating light on the possibilities for storytelling. An analysis of the rendering of the female consciousness in *Pride and Prejudice*--a story prioritizing women in a time where they were so intensely and habitually ignored--can act as a familiar and attainable example for many as to the effect that the prioritizing an experience over simply a narrative can have.

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